



# Resolving a conflict with the boss

May 5, 2009

By Administrative Professional Today

Your boss asked you to prepare a spreadsheet for a meeting the next day. It took a couple of hours and some shuffling of priorities, but you did it.

When you arrive at the meeting, though, your boss handed you a spreadsheet that she (or someone else) created, which means you just did a whole lot of work for nothing.

Should you tell your boss how frustrated you are?

Michael Rosenthal, a partner with negotiation and workplace conflict resolution firm **Consensus**, advises that you first do a temperature check.

"Be sure your emotions are in check. When emotions are at their peak, reasoning capacities are physiologically at their weakest," he says.

Follow these tips, Rosenthal tells *Manage Smarter*, when you're ready to have that difficult conversation with your boss:

**1. Forget about communicating your frustration** for the moment and instead try to learn more about the process itself. Was there a reason your boss moved forward without you? Maybe she forgot she made the assignment, maybe you misunderstood, maybe she wanted a second version.

Say, "I'm a little puzzled by the budgeting process—I was under the impression that you were relying on me to prepare the document, and it seems from our meeting that wasn't the case. Was my assumption wrong all along?"

**2. Share the impact it had on you.** This is important: What you're sharing is not what you think she did wrong, but how you felt. *Example:* "I feel somewhat frustrated because I juggled my priorities to work on the spreadsheet, only to find that you had already completed the assignment."

**3. Map out a plan for avoiding similar situations** in the future. *Example:* "Going forward, I'll send you an e-mail following our initial meeting articulating my expected contributions to ensure we're on the same page."

Your heart-to-heart will clear the air. But, more important, it will set the stage for a better working relationship in the future.